# First Connections' Application to Provide Early Intervention Services / Open Enrollment -- 2021





First Connections, Arkansas' Early Intervention Program under IDEA, Part C, partners with parents and other caregivers to promote their capacity to support their child's early learning and development.

Paper (Print, Fill, Scan, Send) Form Application Deadline: April 30, 2021

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First Connections, Arkansas' Early Intervention Program under IDEA, Part C, partners with parents and other caregivers to promote their **Connections** capacity to support their child's early learning and development.



# **Key principles:**

- Parents and family members are a child's first teachers; with supports and resources all families can enhance their child's learning and development.
- Infants and toddlers learn best in their natural environment through everyday experiences and interactions with familiar people in familiar contexts with typically developing peers.
- All children, no matter what their physical, cognitive, or emotional level of development, need meaningful opportunities to develop skills, establish a sense of self, and lay a foundation for life-long learning.
- All children learning together fosters the potential of every child; children with disabilities have the right to play and learn alongside children without disabilities.
- The family and IFSP team collaboratively plans and writes strategies/activities, services, and supports to enhance the child's participation and learning in natural environments and every day activities, using the child's and family's strengths to overcome challenges and to accomplish goals that reflect family priorities for their child's development.
- Active family/caregiver participation in the early intervention process is critical to a child's development with support and training from qualified early intervention service providers.
- Early intervention is designed to meet the needs of infants and toddlers who have a developmental delay or disability while offering supportive services to the family, like parent education/training to help parents understand their child's developmental abilities in order to promote their child's development.

#### **Open Enrollment:**

Federal regulations that govern States' Part C programs require the lead agency to ensure that early intervention services appropriate to meet the functional child outcomes on the IFSP are provided to the family and other caregivers of every eligible infant and toddler in the State.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requires States' Part C programs to report annually on the results of early intervention to help eligible infants and toddlers:

- have positive relationships
- acquire and use knowledge and skills
- use appropriate behavior to meet their needs

To ensure that families of children with developmental delay and/or disability have access to appropriate early intervention services, First Connections (Arkansas' Part C Program) under the lead agency of the Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services is now opening enrollment to all providers in all counties to expand options to families. To better serve families and children, First Connections is allowing individuals, organizations, or agencies that meet state licensing/credentialing and program requirements the opportunity to become a First Connections (or "Part C") Provider. Existing First Connections providers also have the opportunity to add any County or Counties in which they desire to provide evaluations/services during this Open Enrollment period.

Programs applying to become a First Connections Provider agree to:

- Select <u>at least 2 counties</u> on this application. Carry an active caseload of families receiving early intervention (Part C service or services) **in each county selected** on this application as long as they are a provider for First Connections and receive Part C funding (whether or not the Part C funding is accessed/utilized)
- ✓ Meet First Connections program requirements including use of the program's approved database (CDS) to document all activities with families, caregivers, and children served
- ✓ Participate in the Child Outcome Summary process as part of the family's IFSP team
- Attend IFSP meetings and participate in the development, update, and review of the family's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), including Transition Planning
- Provide early intervention services in the child's home, daycare, or other community location typical forthat family to visit to meet natural environment requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and First Connections' program guidelines. (NOTE: Part C services through First Connections cannot be provided in an EIDT or other non-inclusive or clinic-based setting; "natural environment" is defined federally as the setting and activities in which the child would participate if he/she did not have a disability).
- Provide intervention services in such a way that gives parents and other caregivers the skills they need to facilitate the child's early learning when a therapist or teacher is not present in accordance with 34 CFR §303.12(b)(3) so that EI service providers train, coach, or otherwise support adult caregivers in implementing IFSP strategies within their typical interactions with their child (their routine activities) to support their child's early learning and development.

# **Becoming a First Connections' Provider:**

The process for applying to become a First Connections' provider includes:

- Pre-Application (Completed on or before close of business 4/22/2021):
  - a. Applicant and all providers: Complete EI Orientation (Web-based training) in the "Provider Training" section of the First Connections Web page:

     https://dhs.arkansas.gov/dds/firstconnectionsweb/#fc-eis-provider-training
  - b. Complete EI Orientation online end of course exam with at least 70% accuracy. [Certificate will be e-mailed and must be submitted with this application].
  - c. *Applicant only:* (Provider Program Administrator) completes the online Natural Environment Readiness Self-Assessment course (Web-based training) in the "EIS Provider" section of the First Connections Web page under "How to Become a Service Provider:"\_
    https://dhs.arkansas.gov/dds/firstconnectionsweb/#fc-eis-providers
  - d. Complete the Natural Environment Readiness Self-Assessment Checklist and email to ravyn.hawkins@dhs.arkansas.gov (on or before cob 4/22/21)
  - e. Complete Natural Environment Readiness End of Course Assessment with at least 70% accuracy. [Certificate will be e-mailed and must be submitted with this application].
- Application (Submitted on or before close of business 4/30/2021):
  - 1. Electronically submit completed, signed, and dated Open Enrollment Application and all required documentation to <a href="caroll.l.parker@dhs.arkansas.gov">carol.l.parker@dhs.arkansas.gov</a>; use either the Open Enrollment Provider Application 2021 paper form (scanned and emailed) or use the fillable application form (pp. 6-9) to select at least <a href="two counties">two counties</a> in which to enroll. Submit Open Enrollment Application form (pp. 6-9) with:
    - (a) For applicant and any Provider Program Administator(s) overseeing Part C direct service providers: Natural Environment Readiness Self-Assessment Course Certificate(s)
    - (b) For applicant AND each staff member who will be providing Part C services: Certificate of completed EI Orientation Web training
    - (c) For each staff member who will be providing Part C services: Certification checklist(s) (pp 10-14) and all required documentation (from the certification checklist or checklists) for each service applicant seeks to provide
  - 2. In order to be reimbursed for early intervention services provided, programs/providers must be enrolled with Medicaid, as applicable, prior to service delivery. First Connections will need the following items to assign a DDS Non Medicaid provider type 86:
    - 1. EFT form and voided check or bank letter
    - 2. W9
    - 3. Secretary of State registration, if using a dba name.
    - 4. IRS SS4 approval letter, (501C3 if the facility is non-profit)
    - 5. fiscal year end date (if not provided, it will default to December)
    - 6. Ownership and Conviction Disclosure form DMS 675
    - 7. Disclosure of Significant Business Transactions form DMS 689

To print items 6 and 7, visit: https://www.medicaid.state.a r.us/provider/enroll/enroll.asp x#forms

- **3.** There is an application fee assessed by Medicaid for developmental therapy providers (provider type 78) applying for Medicaid's developmental rehabilitation services (DRS) required in order to bill Medicaid for developmental therapy services.
- **4.** Intervention Specialist (therapists) Applicants serving in the role of *therapy assistant* are not required to meet the licensing/certification requirements of their supervising professional but must meet therapy assistant requirements outlined in the First Connections Certification Standards and <u>must submit a copy of their supervision agreement with their completed application</u>.

Incomplete Open Enrollment Applications or applications lacking all documentation that must accompany the application will not be accepted. For information, call: 501-682-5787 or email: <a href="mailto:carol.l.parker@dhs.arkansas.gov">carol.l.parker@dhs.arkansas.gov</a>

## **The Credentialing Process**

The credentialing process begins when a completed application is received. The application will be screened to ensure all necessary components are present. If the application is complete, it will be sent to Licensing/Certification for processing. Incomplete applications will not be processed. Applicants submitting an incomplete application will be notified.

Once the application has been processed, the applicant will receive notification of provider status. New providers for First Connections may begin providing IFSP services to families of program-eligible infants and toddlers once they have received written notification.

- (a) To be fully certified as a Part C Provider, all new direct service providers (therapists) must complete Core Competencies Training within ninety (90) days from their approval date and upload the certificates of completion into the provider's account in CDS. The notification letter will include the dates/times of the Core Competencies Training. The pre-requisite for the Core Competencies Training is the online EI Orientation online module completed as part of the application process.
- (b) All new direct service providers and service coordinators must complete CDS Training (use of the data system) within thirty (30) days of written notification of provider approved status. CDS Training may be completed by attending a scheduled CDS training workshop or the provider may be trained by another provider who has completed CDS Train the Trainer training (and the trainer on site creates a certificate to include date and hours completed). Certificate is loaded into the provider's account in CDS.

#### The Renewal Process

New providers who joined during Open Enrollment receive a provisional certification. At the end of the provisional certification, new providers who meet program guidelines will be issued a standard certification. Renewal of standard certification is required every three years from date of approval.

Providers cannot provide First Connections certification courses as part of staff training for their own program or for another Part C provider/program other than CDS training when they have a site CDS trainer who has completed the CDS Train the Trainer Workshop.

Quality Assurance performs random reviews/audits of certification credentials in the data system to ensure program/provider compliance with maintaining records. Provider program administration must notify QA or their Monitoring Specialist of any changes or additions to services and/or staff. **Provider program administration cannot certify their own program and/or staff members.** Providers maintain their credentials (including uploading certificates/documentation annually of ongoing professional development hours) in their provider profile in CDS (the approved data system).

A portion of all annual ongoing professional development hours for all staff providing services on an IFSP must be relevant to infants, toddlers, and their families (see Certification Standards or contact the Training Unit for information, if needed).



# First Connections Provider Application Form

Certification is for an: Individual or an Organization (or Provider Program)
Name of Provider Program, Agency, or Organization:
Program Director's/Administrator's Name:
(Note: each provider at the provider program/agency must be certified to provide First Connections services)
Phone Number: ( ) E-mail address:
Mailing Address:
street address
city , state zip code
Individuals applying to provide early intervention must meet state licensing/credentialing requirements in addition to First Connections certification requirements.
Intervention Specialist Applicants:
Applicant seeks to provide the following Part C (Early Intervention) direct service (or services) for First Connections:
☐ Developmental Therapy/Special Instruction  State license or certification (see certification checklist) attached reflecting the credentials required to work in the field selected? ☐ Yes ☐ No Applicant's Medicaid Provider Number:
☐ Occupational Therapy ☐ Physical Therapy ☐ Speech Therapy
State license attached reflecting the credentials required to work in the field selected.   Yes No
Applicant's Medicaid Provider Number:
Therapy Assistant*: (enter discipline: OTA, PTA, etc.) * therapy assistant (only) − is a copy of the supervision agreement attached? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Family Support Specialist Applicants: Individual is seeking to provide the following Part C (early intervention) service or services for First Connections:
Service Coordination in
county/counties
Applicant holds a  Bachelors or  Masters Degree received in:
□ Early Intervention       □ Child Development       □ Special Education         □ Child/Family Studies       □ Social Work       □ "Related field:"
Transcript attached that reflects the degree listed above?   Yes No Applicant has completed 40 hours of SC Certification training and attached certificates?   Yes No
State credentials or license attached for the field or fields selected?   Yes No Assurance Letter Attached?  Yes No Applicant's Medicaid Provider Number:

# All applicants – all four pages of this application (pages 6-9) form must be completed and submitted to be considered – go to next page of this application form:

## **Open Enrollment Provider Application -- Select Services and Counties:**

NOTE: Applicant must agree to provide one (or more) early intervention services in <u>at least two counties</u> to become a First Connections Provider during Open Enrollment:

#### (1) STEP ONE: Service Selection:

Select the service or services that the Provider Program (applicant) is applying to provide.

NOTE: Any service or services selected must be provided to caregivers of eligible infants/toddlers in the child's natural environment (home, childcare program, or community locations) in <u>at least two</u> <u>counties selected</u> by the applicant. *NOTE: Part C services through First Connections cannot be* provided in an EIDT center or other non-inclusive or clinical setting.

#### First Connections El Services and Other Federally-Defined Part C Program Services:

Adaptive Equipment	Service Coordination Services	Physical Therapy Evaluation of body	
		including hands	
CONS – General Services	FSSV – Nursing/Attendant Care	Physical Therapy (Individual)	
CONS – Psychological Services	FSSV – Parent Education	Physical Therapy Assistant	
		(Individual)	
CONS – Audiological Services	FSSV – Health Services	Speech Therapy Evaluation	
CONS – Vision Services	FSSV – Medical Services	Speech Therapy (Individual)	
CONS – Nutrition Services	FSSV – Specialized Evaluation	Speech Therapy (Group)	
CONS – Social Work Services	Occupational Evaluation	Speech Pathology Assistant	
		(Individual)	
Developmental Therapy	Occupational Therapy (Group)	Speech Pathology Assistant (Group)	
Developmental Evaluation	Occupational Therapy (Individual)	Transportation	

#### (2) STEP TWO: Counties Selection:

Select <u>at least two (2) counties</u> in which the Provider Program (applicant) will provide the selected service or services to caregivers of eligible infants/toddlers in the child's natural environment (home, childcare program, or community locations). *NOTE: Part C services through First Connections cannot be provided in an EIDT center or other non-inclusive or clinical setting.* 

NOTE: An applicant may elect to provide different services in different counties. For example: PT in Ashley county and SLP in Bradley county, but not PT and SLP in both Ashley and Bradley counties. In these cases, the applicant must complete a separate service (page 8) and county (page 9) selection for each.

Enter the Location Code for the service settings in which your provider will provide early intervention services selected in step one in each county in which the applicant is applying to become a provider.

# NOTE: A minimum of 2 counties must be selected. NOTE: Location Codes have changed.

#### Locations for early intervention service provision may include:

- **01** In the child's or other family member's residence
- **02** In a regular childcare setting (where child would be if he/she did not have a disability and/or more than 50% of peers are typically developing)
- **03** In "other community location" that the family frequents, and the family selected (park, library, grocery store, church, mall, etc.)

Check Location Code(s) 01, 02,03 for service settings in at least 2 counties where the Provider Program/Applicant will provide early intervention services. Applicant must select one code but may select all three codes in any county applying to serve

Arkansas	Cleburne	Faulkner	Jackson	Marion	Poinsett	Sharp
Ashley	Cleveland	Franklin	Jefferson	Miller	Polk	St. Francis
Baxter	Columbia	Fulton	Johnson	Mississippi	Pope	Stone
Benton	Conway	Garland	Lafayette	Monroe	Prairie	Union
Boone	Craighead	Grant	Lawrence	Montgomery	Pulaski	Van Buren
Bradley	Crawford	Greene	Lee	Nevada	Randolph	Washington
Calhoun	Crittenden	Hempstead	Lincoln	Newton	Saline	White
Carroll	Cross	Hot Spring	Little River	Ouachita	Scott	Woodruff
Chicot	Dallas	Howard	Logan	Perry	Searcy	Yell
Clark	Desha	Independence	Lonoke	Phillips	Sebastian	
Clay	Drew	Izard	Madison	Pike	Sevier	

# **Assurances:**

Applicant/Provider Program Administrator(s) has completed the online Natural Environment Readiness Self-Assessment course and post-assessment and applicant has attached the certificate of completion to this application?   Yes  No
Applicant/Provider Program Administrator(s) and all provider program staff who will provide early intervention/Part C services has completed the (DDS) First Connections' <b>EI Orientation</b> (online course) and post-test and applicant has attached the certificate(s) of completion to this application?
To participate in First Connections' Open Enrollment, I agree to carry an active caseload of families receiving early intervention (Part C service(s)) in <u>at least two counties</u> as long as I am a provider for First Connections and receive Part C funding (whether or not I access/utilize that funding): Yes No
By signing and dating this application, I agree to provide early intervention in the child's natural environment (settings and activities in which the child would participate if he/she did not have a disability) in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C, First Connections' program guidelines, and best practices for early intervention:
By signing and dating this application, I agree to provide intervention services in accordance with the First Connections Parent Participation Agreement so that parents and other caregivers are trained, coached, or otherwise supported in implementing IFSP strategies within their typical interactions with their child (their routine activities) to support their child's early learning and development:
By signing and dating this application, I agree to use the First Connections' approved database (CDS) to document all activities with families, caregivers, and children served:
By signing this application, I agree to ensure designated providers attend IFSP meetings and participate in the development, update, and review of the family's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), including Transition Planning, Transition Conference, and steps for the child and family to exit Part C: Yes No
Signature of Applicant (Provider Program Administrator)  Date

# **First Connections' Certification Checklists**

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OT/OTA, PT/PTA, ST/STA	12
OTHER FEDERALLY DEFINED EI SERVICES	13



# PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST: SERVICE COORDINATION

(DDS) First Connections' EI Orientation training certificate (online course)
Adult Maltreatment Central Registry Check
AR Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check
Criminal Background Checks
Bachelor's degree (or higher) in Education, Social Work, Early Intervention, or related field
OR DDS Certification as a Case Manager
☐ If working as a DDS Certified Case Manager, include signed Code of Ethics Agreement
Documentation 2 years previous experience working with individuals with developmental
disabilities
Documentation of completion of 40 hours of First Connections Service Coordination
Certification courses [required for non-provisional certification]
OR, progress toward completion of the 40 hours – a provisional certificate may
be issued upon completion of the following courses:
Procedural Safeguards (online course)
Intake & Intro to Family Assessment (workshop course)
☐ Child and Family Outcomes (workshop course)
☐ Training on use of CDS (data system)

#### PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST: DEVELOPMENTAL THERAPIST

<ul> <li>□ (DDS) First Connections EI Orientation training (online course) certificate of completion</li> <li>□ Adult Maltreatment Central Registry Check</li> <li>□ AR Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check</li> <li>□ Criminal Background Checks</li> <li>□ Medicaid Provider number (provider type 78)</li> </ul>
☐ Current certification by AR Dept. of Education in Early Childhood Education as an Age 3-4 Endorsement, an Early Childhood / Special Education Integrated Birth − Kindergarten, a Special Education Instructional Specialist (P-4), a Special Education Early Childhood Instructional Specialist (P-4)
OR: Currently working toward completion of Alternate Learning Plan (ALP) approved by organization/entity working for and submitted to DDS  If working under ALP, documentation of completed coursework annually
OR: Completed DDS-approved Developmental Therapist coursework at Henderson State University or other accredited institute of higher education  documentation of completed coursework/degree
PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST: DEVELOPMENTAL THERAPY ASSISTANT
<ul> <li>□ (DDS) First Connections EI Orientation training (online course) certificate of completion</li> <li>□ Adult Maltreatment Central Registry Check</li> <li>□ AR Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check</li> <li>□ Criminal Background Checks</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>☐ Supervision Agreement signed by a DDS-certified Developmental Therapist</li> <li>☐ Copy of Supervisor's certificate in EC Special ED or ALP</li> </ul>

NOTE: DT and DTA enrolling to provide Part C services during Open Enrollment receive a one-year provisional certification. Regular certification at the end of the one-year provisional certification requires completion of First Connections Core Competencies Training and training in the use of the CDS Data System. Required training is documented by uploading the FC certificates of completion in the CDS (approved data system) provider profile.

#### PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST: OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST (DDS) First Connections EI Orientation training (online course) certificate of completion 1. 2. Adult Maltreatment Central Registry Check 3. AR Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check 4. Criminal Background Checks 5. Current license in Occupational Therapy by AR State Medical Board Medicaid Provider number 6. PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST: OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT Items 1-4 (above) for Occupational Therapist plus: Current license as an Occupational Therapy Assistant by the AR Board of Medicine Copy of the supervision agreement PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST: PHYSICAL THERAPIST 1. (DDS) First Connections EI Orientation training (online course) certificate of completion 2. Adult Maltreatment Central Registry Check AR Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check 3. 4. Criminal Background Checks Current license as a Physical Therapist by Board of Physical Therapy Examiners 5. 6. Medicaid Provider number PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST: PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSISTANT Items 1-4 (above) for Physical Therapist plus: Current license as a Physical Therapist Assistant by the AR Board of Medicine Copy of the supervision agreement PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST: SPEECH THERAPIST First Connections EI Orientation training certificate of completion 1. 2. Adult Maltreatment Central Registry Check AR Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check 3. Criminal Background Checks 4. Current license in Speech Therapy by AR Board of Audiology and Speech Language 5. Pathology 6. Medicaid Provider number PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST: SPEECH THERAPY ASSISTANT Items 1-4 (above) for Speech Therapist plus: Current certification as a Speech Therapy Assistant Copy of the supervision agreement

NOTE: OT, PT, SLP and all therapy assistants enrolling to provide Part C services during Open Enrollment receive a one-year provisional certification. Regular certification at the end of the one-year provisional certification requires completion of First Connections Core Competencies Training and training in the use of the CDS data system. Required training is documented by uploading the FC certificates of completion in the CDS (approved data system) provider profile.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY/ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT
Proof of status as a Durable Medical Equipment provider with Arkansas Medicaid Program
Proof of registration with the Office of AR Secretary of State to do business in Arkansas
Letter of Assurance
Medicaid Provider number
ALL OTHERS (CONS AND FSSV):
First Connections EI Orientation training certificate of completion
Adult Maltreatment Central Registry Check
AR Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check
☐ Criminal Background Checks
Medicaid Provider number
CONS/CONSULTATION SERVICES:
VISION
Current license from AR Board of Optometry or AR Board of Ophthalmology or be certified as
an Orientation Mobility Specialist
Letter of Assurance
Medicaid Provider number
PSYCHOLOGY
Current license as a Psychologist or Psychological Examiner by AR Board of Examiners in
Psychology
Letter of Assurance
Medicaid Provider number
SOCIAL WORK
Current license from AR Board of Social Work
Letter of Assurance
Medicaid Provider number
NUTRITION
Current registration as a Registered Dietician by the American Dietetic Association, or Current
provisional registration by the American Dietetic Association, or Current Physician's license by
AR Board of Medicine
Letter of Assurance
Medicaid Provider number
AUDIOLOGY
Current license by AR Speech, Hearing and Language Association
Letter of Assurance
Medicaid Provider number
FSSV/FAMILY SUPPORTS:
ATTENDANT/NURSING
Current nursing license by AR Board of Nursing
Letter of Assurance
Medicaid Provider number
HEALTH CARE SERVICES
Letter of Assurance
☐ Medicaid Provider number
PARENT TRAINING/EDUCATION
Letter of Assurance
☐ Medicaid Provider number